

No Fence Sitting in This Match



Edward Wright, an Olympic fencer, teaches children the sport. *Vinit Murthy.*

The art of fencing and overcoming

By **COREY GIBSON**
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Contending for an Olympic medal is itself an accomplishment. But some athletes, such as Edward Wright, had to contend with more than just the rigors of sport and competition to get there. Wright had to struggle as a child to even be allowed to get into the game.

1963 was a momentous time for the civil rights movement in the United States. President John F. Kennedy promised a civil rights bill. James Meredith became the first African-American student to graduate from the University of Mississippi. The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. gave his “I Have a Dream” speech and issued his letters from Birmingham Jail after being arrested during protests against racial segregation – protests sometimes broken up by police with fire hoses and attack dogs. 1963 was also the year Edward Wright would join Brooklyn High School’s fencing team. Thirteen years later he would fence in the Olympics.

On a Saturday in late July, Wright walks into the Corryville Recreation Center wearing a worn yellow T-shirt that says, “A Champion Maker” in bold, black lettering across the front. He is hardly what someone would picture when they think about an Olympic fencer who is just past his prime. He is stocky, about six feet tall, with long dreads that dip just past his shoulder. A few wiry gray hairs stick out in all different directions. He is wearing black sweats and Timberland boots.

Little beads of sweat trickle down his forehead as he arrives at the gymnasium, as if he were warming up before the class had even started. Wright tells his

A Quarter-Century Cause

IJPC still working for peace and justice

By **BRIAN O'DONNELL**
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Aug. 6 marked the 65th anniversary of the day the United States killed 140,000 people in Hiroshima, Japan, with an atomic bomb.

In a quiet park along the Ohio River near downtown Cincinnati, the Intercommunity Justice and Peace Center remembered the event with a candlelit walk at dusk through paper sunflowers representing renewed hope and life.

The mood was visibly somber as guests were invited to read the messages on the sunflowers, inscribed with quotations of peace and forgiveness from the likes of the late Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and poet Maya Angelou.

Among those in attendance was Sister Janet Schneider of the Sisters of Divine Providence. Born four years after the end of World War II, she remembers learning in school of the atomic bomb as necessary to end the War, that it was OK. Her understanding of the event now sees it as “a horrible devastation that 140,000 people were killed by a bomb the United States dropped.”

Mark Burwinkel said his attendance at the park was in



(L to R) Eunice Timoney Ravenna, Sr. Alice Gerdeman, and Kristen Barker of Intercommunity Justice and Policy Center. *IJPC.*

recognition of Hiroshima’s destruction.

“Partly, we haven’t learned from it, but it’s more of a sorrow,” he said. “Especially since it’s likely it could happen again.”

See **Cause**, p.

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By The Numbers

24

The deadline, in number of hours, for a city council committee to post its agenda prior to a meeting (see page 11).

50,000

The number of West End residents displaced by the construction of Interstate 75 (see page 12).

1492

The year American Indians began fighting terrorism (see page 16).

12

The number of years Pat Clifford served as executive director of the Drop Inn Center (see page 12).

1996

The year Edward Wright won a national fencing championship (see page 1).

11

The hour of the morning by which Rose was blissfully drunk (see page 6).

140,000

The death toll from the U.S. atomic bombing of Hiroshima (see page 1).

13,000

The amount, in dollars, needed to keep the executive director's position at the North American Street Newspaper Association through the end of the year (see page 6).

5

Andrew Martin's age when his mother left his family (see page 13).

48

Joann Burton's age when she died in Washington Park (see page 9).

Streetwise

By GREGORY FLANNERY
EDITOR

“A Result of the Work”

The Drop Inn Center is under pressure from the city of Cincinnati, from its satrap – the Cincinnati Center City Development Corp. (3CDC) – and from Downtown Cincinnati Inc. – so its decision to fire Pat Clifford, executive director, must be seen in that context. That's why no one is talking: It's too hot to handle.

Clifford, who has worked at the Drop Inn Center for 20 years – the past 12 as executive director – learned Aug. 9 that he was no longer needed. The board **fired him without giving a reason**, Clifford says.

“I was called to a meeting, where I was told,” he says. “Some board members were present, and they informed me. The staff members were informed the next day. It's basically a decision to part ways. The board hires and fires the director. I work by their leave: ‘Your services are no longer required. A decision has been reached, and that's that.’ That was basically the tone: ‘We wish you the best.’ ”

Clifford says he didn't see it coming.

“Yeah, I was surprised,” he says. “It wasn't like anything had happened to lead me to think this was going to happen, I don't want to speculate as to why.”

Clifford is a consummate professional, but the context for his dismissal is no mystery to outsiders. He cares about homeless people. He believes in the mission of the Drop Inn Center. These mark him as the enemy of the forces that forced him out. Cincinnati wants the Drop Inn Center's property for other purposes. It's in the way. He's in the way.

“It's an internal restructuring, a result of the work that's been done, without any political pressure,” says Elissa Pogue, president of the board of the Drop Inn Center.

Sure.

“The work that drives all of this is to do what's best for homeless people,” Pogue says.

The board of the Drop Inn center has named Arlene Miller, the center's chief financial officer, its interim director. Clifford's successor isn't yet known.

“Right now we don't have anybody in mind,” Pogue says.

Nor does Clifford know where he'll go next.

“I don't know,” he says. “I want to be of service somewhere. That's who I am. I'm concerned about basic human necessities, making sure people have those.”

The poor kind fool. That is so not in sync with Cincinnati.

It's Just a Coincidence

Similarly, the death of Joann Burton – run over by a police car as she lay in the grass in Washington Park – can be seen as a freak accident. Or it can be seen as an illustration of the forces that mark Cincinnati as **a place hostile to homeless people**. Washington Park, across the street from the Drop Inn Center, is about to be closed off from the neighborhood, with 59 of its trees destroyed, the dead who lie beneath it disinterred to make way for an underground parking garage, its swimming pool and basketball court destroyed, in order to make the park more appealing to the upper-income people whom 3CDC and city council want to inhabit Over-the-Rhine. These things are all coincidences. Don't bother yourself with the deeper meaning.

Naughty Language

Streetvibes recently declined to participate in a ceremony honoring its work on behalf of people who have disabilities (see ‘*Streetvibes*’ Boycotts Own Award,” issue of Aug. 1-14). The Cincinnati Human Relations Commission wanted to present the award on Fountain Square, where a city ordinance and 3CDC's regulations forbid our vendors to distribute the newspaper. The *Cincinnati Enquirer* reported our position, which prompted a conservative Catholic blog (richleonardi.blogspot.com) to weigh in. The blog called *Streetvibes* “the **profanity-filled newspaper published by the Greater Cincinnati Coalition for the Homeless.**” We think this refers to words such as “cocksucker,” used by rocker John Mellencamp in an interview in this edition.

For the record, we believe that any organization, such as 3CDC, that forces poor people out of Over-the-Rhine or closes its park qualifies for the term “cocksucker.”

Progress Comes to City Hall

But let us not be glum. Progress happens – slowly, slowly. Thus Cincinnati City Council has grudgingly decided that the city will no longer automatically bar all persons everywhere who have ever been convicted of a felony of any kind anywhere under any circumstances from being hired for a city job. The city will no longer require job applicants to answer a question on its application form about criminal records. Rather, applicants can make their case in the interview process. Granted, this is a small change, but an important first step.

The Ohio Justice and Policy Center labored long and hard to get this far, arguing that a person convicted of a crime and imprisoned for it has already paid her debt to society and now deserves **a second chance**. Otherwise, what's a person who made a mistake to do? Sleep in Washington Park? That can get you killed. Work at a homeless shelter? That can get you fired without warning.

It's a cruel cocksucker of a city we live in.

Streetvibes is an activist newspaper, advocating justice and building community. *Streetvibes* reports on economic issues, civil rights, the environment, the peace movement, spirituality and the struggle against homelessness and poverty. Distributed by people who are or once were homeless, in exchange for a \$1 donation, *Streetvibes* is published twice a month by the Greater Cincinnati Coalition for the Homeless.

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The Greater Cincinnati Coalition for the Homeless

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No Fence Sitting in This Match



Edward Wright, left, teaches students the art of fencing. Vinit Murthy.

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students to start preparing for the hour-long class. His voice is grizzly and worn, the voice of someone who continually shouts. Yet Wright, a soft-spoken individual, never yells at the students and tries to help them not only understand fencing, but understand where fencing can take them in their futures.

'Not just stabbing'

Wright's fencing career started in the form of soccer. He played soccer for three years on his Brooklyn junior high-school team in the late 1950s, before dreaming of making the high-school football team. At the time, Wright was a lot smaller than he is today and he couldn't make the cut for the high school football team. So he went back to playing soccer, even though the coach would never put him in.

"I'd tell the coach to put me in," Wright says. "I'd say, 'Coach there's five minutes left and we're winning 10 to nothing.' He never put me in. That's how bad I was."

Wright's soccer coach suggested he try out for the fencing team. Although fencing was a foreign idea to Wright at the time, he found a place that taught fencing, gave it a shot and practiced seven days a week for an entire summer, sometimes practicing three to four hours a day.

"I even stopped going to church," Wright says. "I wanted to make the team."

The practicing paid off and Wright made the team in 1963. And he has been at it ever since. Wright placed fifth in the team-fencing event in the 1976 Olympics, was a U.S. National Championship Fencing finalist and most recently, in 1996, won the U.S. National Veteran

Championship.

Reaching that level of competition was a struggle for Wright because of the color of his skin.

"Most of the clubs kept black people from joining," he says.

The New York Fencing Club, at the time, had only one or two black members when Wright tried to join in the late '60s. Wright didn't agree with the stipulations the club set for him and decided not to join.

"They were racist," he says.

Luckily, the man revered as "the father of American fencing" Georgio Santelli, was seeking out Wright. At first Wright was a bit timid to study under Santelli because of the intense workouts; Wright says he could hardly last 10 minutes. But after a few years he began studying under Santelli.

"He made champions out of bunch of us," Wright says. "And by a bunch of us, I mean a bunch of black people."

Wright wants to do the same thing for his students. He wants them to

learn discipline, he wants them to become the best fencers they can possibly become and he wants to get scholarships for his students. Watching one of his classes, it is easy to tell that Wright pushes his students to perfect every aspect of their fencing.

"Because he stresses form ... and execution, the movement is done correctly," says David Jacobs, Wright's assistant fencing instructor. "That translates into the kids not just stabbing or swinging or move backwards or forwards – they are having to have the discipline to do the movements correctly."

The class is more of a workout than one might expect from a sport that has bouts as short as three minutes long. Although the air was humid and sweat droplets were forming on the forehead of Wright and most of his students, the grueling workout continues. The students, who range in ages from pre-teens to much older men and women, receive flurries of instructions from Wright.

"En-guard" Wright yells, clapping his hands to a beat he wants the students to follow as they lunge forward, ending with a thrust of the sword at an imaginary opponent. The students keep attacking forward until they reach the other side of the room. Wright then makes the students practice their retreat back to the side of the gymnasium they were previously on. The attack and retreat exercise continues for a short while as Wright dodges in and out of the seven students, correcting the stances of each and every person until they are all in unison, lunging across the gymnasium.

The right of way

After a few more times back and forth across the gymnasium, Wright stops the students in place and tells them to hold out their swords, called "foils," for upwards of 60 seconds. Although a foil only weighs slightly more than one pound, the students counted off the 60 seconds in less than 30 seconds, just to get the exercise over with quicker. Wright continues to make the students hold out their foils and count at lower increments, from 60 to 30 to 20 to 10 and finally 5, until the students are visibly tired.

After another short break, the students, who all have their own bags of fencing equipment, put on their fencing masks and all-white fencing uniforms in preparation for the final phase of the class.

Nearing the end of the class, Wright takes each student aside for some one-on-one teaching while the rest of the students have their own bouts, in which two students fence and the others act as the referees. Scoring a point in fencing seems difficult, but refereeing a bout might be even more so. To score a point in fencing, and ultimately get to the five touches needed to win a bout, the fencer has to have "the right of way." That is, the fencer has to initiate the attack or execute a block of his opponent's attack, called a "parry," before he can score. The tip of the foil is the second fastest moving object in sports, after a marksman's bullet, so refereeing a bout seems impossible. Each referee calls on the others to assist one another in making the correct calls during the impromptu

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bouts.

Even though the students' bouts are impressive, the highlight of the class is Wright's one-on-one interaction with them. As a student's and Wright's foils clash together in combat,

also called a "conversation," it is as if Wright knows exactly where the student is going to strike. He stops the bout and takes the tip of the student's foil,

points it to his chest and thrusts it into his dark black uniform, telling the student to hit him there. The conversation between the swords continues again as the student tries to hit the spot – succeeding only when Wright lets him. With his eyes half closed, Wright retreats, fending off thrusts from the foil, and then lunges forward for a halfhearted attack that catches the student off guard. Wright casually looks around the room and observes his other students as they fence each other, all the while still defending strikes

The attack and retreat exercise continues for a short while as Wright dodges in and out of the seven students, correcting the stances of each and every person until they are all in unison, lunging across the gymnasium.

from the student he is fencing with. After a one-on-one session, Wright gives tips to the student and calls the next over, only to repeat the process again.

DeAndre Cruse, a newcomer, says he enjoyed the class. He spent much of his time with Jacobs, Wright's

assistant, who taught Cruse the proper way to hold his foil, the form he needed to use when making lunges and other requirements. Cruse's mother, Jerri Williams, says she enjoys

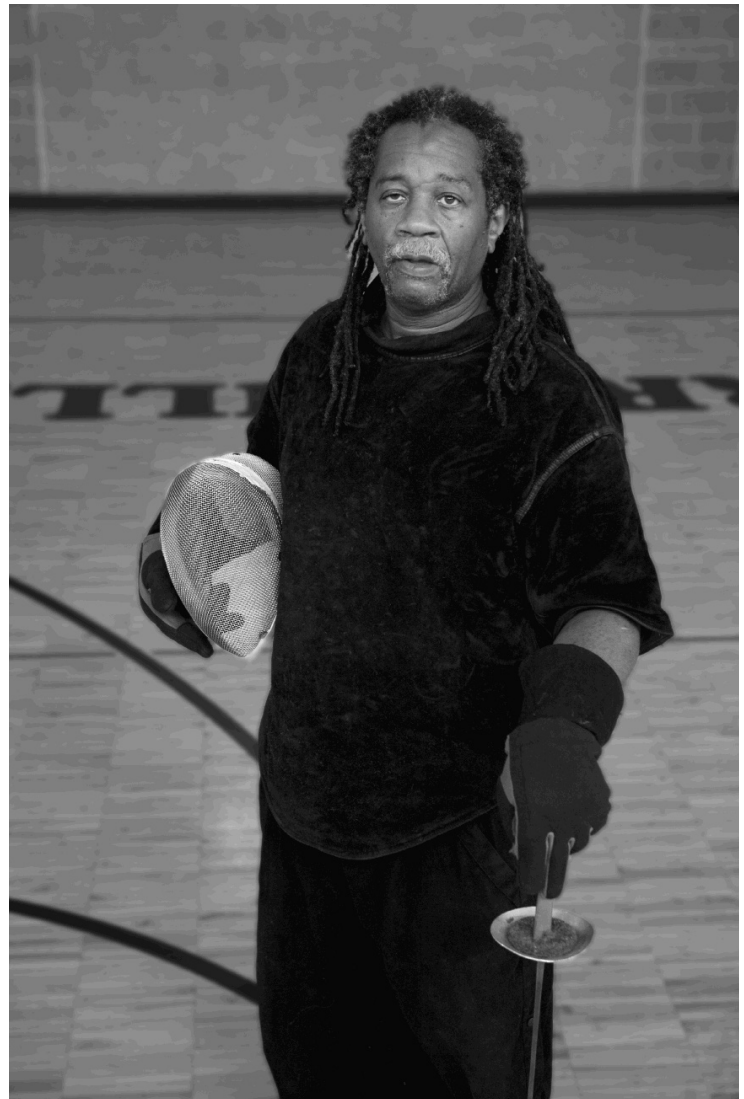
watching it.

"And I think he enjoyed doing it," Williams says.

She also says the workout and the discipline her son was going to receive were an added bonus.

Wright moved from New York to Cincinnati nearly 15 years ago to teach fencing. He says he still enjoys it, even after teaching thousands of students in his 35-year career.

"I want to make champions," Wright says. "I just want to make champions."



Edward Wright. Vinit Murthy.

A Quarter-Century in the Cause

Continued from page 1

The vigil in Theodore Berry International Friendship Park was not only for remembrance of the dead, but also a call to activism.

"One of the biggest reasons I came is it creates energy, energy for a difference," Burwinkel said.

Sister Alice Gerdeman, IJPC's coordinator, spoke of the upcoming U.S. Senate vote on ratification of the new Strategic Arms

Reduction (START) Treaty, which calls for nuclear arms reductions by the United States and Russia

"We need a new start," she said.

Gerdeman has been with IJPC for 19 years. She says IJPC acts as an advocate for issues ranging from immigrant rights to racism to the environment. Now celebrating its 25th year, Gerdeman recalls how the organization has changed since 1985.

The group was very educational in its infancy. It "built on education to advocate," she says.

In the 1980s, IJPC advocated for justice in Latin America, in particular for refugees who fled the civil war from El Salvador. This led IJPC to a courtroom victory against the U.S. State Department, allowing the refugees to enter the United States. More recently, the focus on Latin American rights has shifted to human rights in general.

"Justice work never stops," Gerdeman says. "You

have small successes along the way but there's always the next step."

Working alongside other groups locally and nationwide, IJPC continues to advocate a growing list of causes, including the use of the death penalty in Ohio.

"We get very disappointed every time there is an execution," Gerdeman says.

Ohio has executed a total of 382 prisoners in its history, according to the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction.

Despite holding political views that can polarize people, Gerdeman says God provides and gives IJPC

what it needs.

"We've always managed to scrape by," she says.

From donations by individuals and grants, IJPC has managed to continue its advocacy for 25 years, always through non-violence.

"We will not be a part of any activity that has violence as one of its strategies," Gerdeman says. "The power of non-violence and good is greater than any evil."

Kristen Barker heads up IJPC's peace and non-violence program. Her program has two goals: uproot war and tear down unjust structures. She works toward these goals through various programs such as Before You Enlist, which

tries to limit the influence of military recruiters in public high schools and offers students alternative ways to serve the country. Her other programs relate back to IJPC's origins in education and understanding.

"It's about broadening your mind," Barker says. "We just want people to be informed."

IJPC's Day of Dialogue program brings together people with opposing viewpoints to discuss controversial topics and slow down the conversation.

"This offers a chance for transformation and learning," Barker says.

In a continuation of its commitment to education, IJPC offers "Peace Team/Nonviolence" training. This offers people skills for successfully

intervening in potentially violent situations without escalating them. Barker says there is no shortage of people wanting to train, and she has a waiting list for upcoming training sessions.

With its 25th anniversary celebration on the way, IJPC provides more than 20 services and activities in the name of social justice.

"In order to confront violence and war, we need to be the opposite of it in the way we speak and act," Gerdeman says.

IJPC's 25th anniversary celebration will be Sept. 25 at Purcell Marion High School. Call 513-579-8547 for ticket information.

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Street Papers Revolt at Meeting

Layoff of staff prompts uproar

By GREGORY FLANNERY
EDITOR

Chicago, Ill. – Members of the North American Street Newspaper Association (NASNA) reacted angrily to news that the board of the organization planned to lay off Executive Director Andy Freeze.

The July 30 annual meeting of NASNA turned into a rump parliament, with delegates from street newspapers across the United States and Canada forcing the board to reconfigure the conference schedule in order to debate the layoff.

The board said it's out of money due to unexpected rent expenses at its office in Washington, D.C., and the loss of a grant that had paid for the executive director's position. The layoff is necessary in order to avert bankruptcy, according to Serge Laureault, a NASNA board member and executive

director of *L'Itineraire* in Montréal, Canada.

Freeze, who is the former education coordinator for the Greater Cincinnati Coalition for the Homeless, is NASNA's first and only paid staff.

Israel Bayer, president of the board, said NASNA had no paid staff for its first 12 years and will now continue as an all-volunteer organization. Bayer is executive director of *Street Roots* in Portland, Ore.

Representatives of street papers criticized the board for not informing them of the fiscal crisis earlier. Bruce Gimbel, who recently started a street paper in Tampa, Fla., said he would have gladly raised money to help keep Freeze as executive director. Several new street papers said Freeze was instrumental in helping them.

The heated debate led to several last-minute nominations for vacancies on the board (see "Differences as Strengths,"

page 5).

The NASNA annual meeting re-convened July 31. The board said it needed \$13,000 to keep Freeze on the job through the end of 2010. Freeze then announced that, for the good of the organization, he would not continue in the executive director's position. Freeze said his strength has been in member services, not in fundraising.

Board members Rick Barnes, publisher of the *Denver VOICE*, and Ben Siew, a psychologist affiliated with Barnes's for-profit and non-profit work, were absent from the session.

The meeting at DePaul University was in a room containing a blackboard. The board listed as one of its future priorities "better communication with members."

Laureault, who has been a NASNA board member for six years, announced that he would not seek election to another two-year term.



Andy Freeze, North American Street Newspaper Association executive director.
Lynne Ausman.

Laureault is president of the board of the International Network of Street Newspapers.

With no executive director, NASNA reverts to an all-

volunteer organization, with the board responsible for the tasks that Freeze had performed.

Differences Build NASNA's Strength

NASNA builds a new board of volunteer leadership

By MARGO PIERCE
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Chicago, Ill. – Street papers have two things in common: a commitment to serving economically disadvantaged individuals and a passion for supporting those people. The list of differences is significantly longer and ranges from opposing views on editorial content and political activism to handling vendor training and the importance of paid staff. Bringing these varied perspectives together is the reason for the annual conference of the North American Street Newspaper Association (NASNA).

Approximately 75 people from street papers all across the United States and Canada gathered July 30-Aug. 1 to learn from each other and participate in the annual meeting. This year's conference included a dramatic change in the makeup of NASNA's board of directors.

After a heated debate about the loss of funding for the organization (see "Street Papers Revolt at Meeting," page 5), members wanted

more from their board: more communication, more input, more accessibility.

To make that happen, four people offered their time to fill vacant positions on the nine-member

board. They come from cities of varying sizes and geographic location and bring essential skills to the tasks of fundraising and developing journalistic excellence. The new board members are Gregory Flannery, editor of *Streetvibes*; David Jefferson, editor of *Spare Change News* in Boston, Mass.; Kathleen Porch, development manager for *Real Change* in Seattle, Wash.; and Eddie Young, executive director of *The Amplifier* in Knoxville, Tenn.

In an organization utilizing journalism to make a positive impact, Flannery says he hopes to use his experience to improve the credibility of the street-paper movement. A biography on NASNA's

Web site (nasna.org) says Flannery "made his mark by exposing illegal wiretapping by the Cincinnati Police Department" and "later wrote articles that led to the successful prosecution of

three Catholic priests who had sexually abused children." Also noted is the 2009 "Best Feature Story" award he received from the International Network of Street Papers.



Streetvibes Editor Gregory Flannery pitches in.

"I learned a long time ago that a small newspaper can make a big difference," Flannery says. "If you put a whole lot of small newspapers together, they can make a huge difference. That's what NASNA is."

With each paper representing a different community, culture and local priorities, it's going to be a challenge to keep this volunteer-driven governing body focused on broader and commonly shared challenges – the criminalization of homelessness (see "Being Homeless is Against the Law," issue of March 14), panhandling restrictions, inadequate shelter space, etc. And

the board must do all this while trying to maintain services in the face of a budget shortfall resulting in the layoff of Executive Director Andy Freeze, NASNA's only paid staffer.

"The board has to do a better job of communicating with the membership," Flannery says. "At the general meeting, we saw what happens when the membership learns there is a problem. The members set aside their differences and became engaged and tried to help. If we can channel that energy and commitment on our shared objectives, the board can help move the street-paper movement forward."

"I learned a long time ago that a small newspaper can make a big difference. If you put a whole lot of small newspapers together, they can make a huge difference. That's what NASNA is."

-Gregory Flannery

Parsing Poverty and Community

Rose celebrates her birthday, and mourns

Rose’s birthday started early, and it started out happy. Rose is not her real name, but Rose is what we’ll call her. She hangs out nearly every day on the steps of a building near the place where I work, and we have become friendly. She is a small, damaged woman with a random collection of teeth, a history of grief and a fondness for Steel Reserve malt liquor. She’s damaged, I say, in all the ways that alcohol and living can cause, but you can see that she might have been a lovely woman at one time. She’s slim – probably too slim – and has a ready smile, and she manages to bring a certain stylishness to her clothing, in spite of it all.

For her birthday, she and her friends had gathered in the morning in front of the apartment building right next to the office where I work and where some of them lived. At 8:30, as I was scrambling to get in to work on time, she stopped me and asked, did I have a safety pin?

“It’s for my first dollar,” she explained. She reminded me it was her birthday.

I didn’t have a safety pin, but somebody did, for when I saw her a couple hours later, she waved to me and pointed to a pair of dollar bills pinned to her blouse. They fluttered there all day. She must have collected many more dollars; by 11, when I stepped out again, she was blissfully drunk and her eyes were glazed.

She had an open can of Steel Reserve in her hand and her friends, equally drunk, were all around her, laughing loudly and singing snatches of song.

How could a birthday be better than that?

* * * * *

One of the paradoxical effects of poverty is that it drives people apart, but it also brings them together. People in poverty are pushed to the fringes of society, but they are also pushed into the arms of one another. If we study communities in poverty, we see a great deal of horizontal violence, in which people who are pressed down attack each other instead of the oppressors. But we also see heroic acts of mutual support. Rose and her friends have no steady income, but they have an “abandonium” they have developed out of a nearby abandoned building where they share space, food and other resources, just like a commune, minus the bean sprouts and fortified by malt liquor.

This is an aspect of poverty rarely noted or commented on: the bonds of mutual support, usually manifested in family, but also extending to others. This is not something very often measured or praised. Any night we can turn on the news and see reports of violence in poor communities. If we read the reports, we can know how many reported acts of violence happen each year, city by city, neighborhood by neighborhood, and we know these numbers are only a fragment of what actually occurs. But for the acts of kindness, sacrifice, solidarity, we have no measure at all. We may not know of all the abuse that occurs, but we have statistics. But we have no statistics for the frequency of nurturance, care, or support. Crime? We can tell you. But what is the opposite of crime? We don’t even have a word for what happens when a person has every reason to commit crime but doesn’t.

* * * * *

Who paid for Rose’s party? It had to be the people around her, her neighbors and friends. Pensioners gave up a little of what they had. The metal scrappers came back from Garden Street with a little of what they made turning car fenders and abandoned refrigerators into cash. Somebody went downtown and flew a sign on Court Street for a few hours, so people were able to eat and, more important, drink through the day.

What does Rose have left to celebrate? Most of her teeth and most of her self-respect are gone, as are her husband to cancer and her children to foster care.

I think there is a certain purity to her celebration, like that of a saint or a Bodhisattva, for she has nothing left to celebrate but another day of living. You or I might not call it living, but it’s her life to decide what she’s living.

If it’s too far a stretch to compare a sloppy drunk in Over-the-Rhine to a saint or a Bodhisattva, then let’s leave her to celebrate the generous dollars that have come her way. You can be sure they will be gone before morning,

but she seems glad to see them.

It’s not much of a life and it’s not that many dollars.
But she does have her friends.

* * * * *

At various times in my life, I have worked as a community organizer. For part of that time, I had a mentor in the field who told me that what we were doing was not necessarily winning victories for a community. In doing community organizing, we were organizing community, he said, and the creation of community was a victory all by itself.

Think about what we build when we build community. We create bonds among a group of people who share some common interest and common need and, in the process of addressing that interest and need come also to share an identity and a sense of fellow-feeling and an ethos of mutual support. This is worth having even if we don’t win the new playground or stop the power plant (though I won’t deny that winning is nice).

* * * * *

Even the best of birthday drinking cannot always outmaneuver pain. By mid-afternoon, when I come back from an errand, Rose is in tears. She has moved from the steps to the shade of a tree and she sits at the foot of the tree, sighing and cursing and lamenting in words too obscure and unprintable for me to repeat here. She has a lot to lament: husband, children, false sisters, her health, her teeth – all gone. But – this is the miracle of poverty as a gift: Her friends are all around her, right on the ground with her. What they said was as obscure and unprintable as Rose’s curses and lamentations, but it seemed to be a comfort to her to have them lamenting and cursing right along with her.

Rose lamented, and her friends comforted.

And so the day wound down. Her friends did what friends do – they stayed at her side and they comforted her in her hour of need, just as they shared her joy hours earlier.

* * * * *

To break with poverty is to break with the mutually sustaining community of the poor. And such a break can be painful and dramatic. There is a whole literature dedicated to the pain of that break (as in *Great Expectations* by Dickens or *Sons and Lovers* by D.H. Lawrence). “Don’t get above your raisin’” warns an old country saying (and an even better bluegrass song). To break with this community is to mark oneself as proud, arrogant, self-centered, puffed-up, better than others. And the person who leaves poverty might experience a great deal of alienation, isolation, guilt, prejudice, disorientation and loneliness.

And yet, for addicts in poverty, such a break with the community might be crucial to recovery. Old people, old places, old things is a formula for relapse. The recovering person must find new community quickly, before the terrible sense of isolation, coupled with the cravings of addiction, bring the addict right back to the corner.

Hence, the urgency of the 12-step programs, which build a new community for the addict, as well as after-care planning and other systems of support.

* * * * *

When I left for home, the sun had shifted again, and Rose’s party had moved across the street. She had drunk herself nearly numb, and her eyes were distant and abstracted. She was weeping more quietly now, and only two of the friends remained. They were drunk and subdued as well. Perhaps they were thinking of their own losses. Perhaps they had drunk enough Steel Reserve that they did not need to think at all.

The dollars still fluttered from Rose’s blouse. She waved again, and I crossed to wish her happy birthday one last time.

She wiped back the latest tears from her cheeks and she thanked me and she smiled.

Her friends smiled with her.

Michael Henson is author of *Ransack*, *A Small Room with Trouble on My Mind*, *The Tao of Longing* and *Crow Call*.



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When the Walls Come Tumbling

John Mellencamp on
poverty and music

Toledo, Ohio – Editor’s note: John Mellencamp met last month with Ken Leslie of the Toledo Streets. They discussed Mellencamp’s long career in music and his commitment to social justice. Reprinted with permission of the *Toledo Streets*.

Ken Leslie: On behalf of 1Matters, Toledo Streets and the street paper movement and everyone who has lost domestic or financial autonomy in our country, thank you for your time today.

We first met two years ago or so when you made an un-promoted stop at the annual Tent City, Project Homeless Connect, in Toledo. You just wanted them to know they matter. Bob Merlis (Mellencamp’s publicist) told me you were touched by the experience. How so?

John Mellencamp: When you see what progress can produce, and also what progress can discard, it makes a feller wonder if some of the progress, let me put it this way, calling it progress does not make it right.

In this country right now there is no middle class, no place for middle class. You are either really rich or you are really down and out. It’s hard times in this country right now.

KL: You brought your wife, Elaine, and son, Speck, with you to Tent City. When you had your private talk with some of the unhoused, at first Speck stood back, but by the end of your conversation he was in the circle listening to every word. Compassion is a pretty cool thing for a father to pass on to a son. Did he share his thoughts on the experience before and after?

JM: I don’t remember exactly, but I will tell you he is a very activist type of kid. I found that out when he was pretty young. He did some research at school on some chocolate company and he wrote them a letter and it said, “You cheapskates, why don’t you hire and why don’t you pay fair, ya so-and-so.” And he almost got me into trouble last year, too.

KL: How so?

JM: He had a petition on Facebook to try to get me to stop smoking. He had, I think, about a half a million people sign up and he had to get a million. The whole conversation was just at Thanksgiving last year. We had completed our Thanksgiving dinner and I lit up a cigarette at the table. He looked at me and he went like, “Really, Dad?” And I said, “What do you mean, ‘Really Dad’? I smoke all the time?” And he said, “Yeah, but it’s Thanksgiving, I’m not done eating.” I said, “OK, I’ll go somewhere else; it’s a big house.” So I went into another room.

A couple hours later he walks up and said, “Hey Dad, if I get a million people to sign up on Facebook, would you stop smoking?” And I said, “Yeah, go ahead.” That was the end of the conversation.

By the time the thing had started, ya know, a couple weeks into it, Larry King wanted him to come on, Good Morning America asked him, and of course I wouldn’t let him go on anywhere. First of all, I don’t want him talking about my bad habits; and second of all, ya know, I knew he’d reach his mark.

KL: And then what?

JM: And then I’d have to stop smoking.

KL: Would ya? Have you tried? How many times have you tried?

JM: Listen, I have no desire to stop, so there’s no reason to even have that conversation. If I would have wanted to stop smoking, I would have years go.

KL: Took me like 32 times of quittin’ to finally do it.

JM: Yeah, well, you wanted to stop. I’m confirmed.

KL: And your other son, Hud?

JM: He’s 16 years old and he fights tomorrow night.

KL: Boxer or Extreme?

JM: Boxer. He holds five state championships



John Mellencamp says an early band mate was shunned for being black. *Toledo Streets*.

right now. He just got back from Annapolis. They want him to be a boxer for them and he went up and trained for two weeks.

KL: Was that nerve-wracking to see him box?

JM: No, I know how much Hud trains. He’s ready to fight. His record is 20-2. He’s a bad-ass, I can tell ya that.

KL: Did you ever box?

JM: No, I could fight in the street, but this is a sport to him. He’s very good at it. I’m proud of them both.

KL: When you were on stage at Tent City, you spontaneously decided to invite everybody there to your concert, all of the unhoused people.

JM: Right.

KL: Sixty to 70 people went, and I understand you talked to them from the stage about hope. As you know, one of the guests came back from the show and said “Ken, John talked to us from the stage – I guess I really do matter.” That was the founding moment of 1Matters and actually that’s why we’re here today. Your whole career, you’ve had the compassion for and worked for those with little or no voice. What is the root of that compassion in John Mellencamp? Where does it come from? Was there something in your childhood maybe that started this feeling of compassion?

JM: Well, for me, it started with race. I was in a band when I was 13-14 years old and it was the mid-’60s and it was a racially mixed band. I was the lead singer, and this black kid was a singer. He was a couple years older than me, really good. We’d play every weekend at fraternities and in hotels and stuff like that. It was a soul band. And I saw the way people treated him. Ya know, it was like wow, really? Wait a minute, you loved him on stage, but now he’s gotta go wait outside? And so I think that made quite an impression on me as a young guy.

KL: How’d you respond?

JM: Well, there were times that there were fistfights. I remember in a little town in Indiana there was a fistfight in between one of our breaks because of his race. So, ya know.

KL: And since then you’ve carried on standing up for farmers, for the people. I remember Jena. You stuck up for people there and actually put a lot of your work and effort into that.

JM: Well I’m Sisyphus myself; I’m always the guy who’s rolling the rock up the hill. Ya know, and

every time I get too close to the top, I either let it roll back down on purpose or it just rolls back, catches on fire and rolls down at someone. So I know what it’s like to have to work at something. My struggle is obviously different than some folks’ struggle, but nevertheless we all have our problems.

KL: How would you define your struggle?

JM: Um, well I’ll answer it like this: A man writes to what he strives to be, not what he is.

KL: The crucible that caused me to get involved in this movement in 1990 was a result of performing in comedy clubs all across the country in the late ’80s and seeing more and more people on the streets. It was the statistic that 60 percent of them were families with children that forced me to act and do something. For you, with Farm Aid, tell me about that one moment that caused you to be a part 25 years ago and to maintain it even today.

JM: I had written a song with a friend of mine called “Rain on the Scarecrow,” and I had just made an album about what I had seen – ya know, what prosperity had done to the small towns, how they had leveled them out and devastated small-town America. So we made this record called Scarecrow; and then when Willie (Nelson) called, there was like, it took me about a second to decide I wanted to be a part of Farm Aid. When Willie called up, he had like a vague notion of what Farm Aid was gonna be. It was no more than just a vague notion, and we really had no idea it was gonna last. We have our 25th anniversary coming up October 2.

KL: What was Willie’s notion?

JM: Ah, he didn’t really have much of a notion, it was a bunch of maybes and guesses and “I don’t knows,” ya know.

KL: Did that start because of Bob Dylan’s comment at Live Aid?

JM: Ah, that’s what he said, you know, that Bob had said something about, you know, that we should try to take care of our own people. I think that inspired Willie.

KL: One of the things that I’ve always admired about you is your courage in social justice. You take a huge pile of truth, dump it in front of them and say, “Smell this.” Based on your lifetime of fighting for the truth, has your position changed in the sense

“Feed Me, Seymour, Feed Me All Night Long...”



Tired of plain ol' grilled cheese sandwiches? Try this one on for size. *Jeni Jenkins.*

Grilled Cheese w/ Tomato on Sourdough

Serving Size: 1 belly

½ tablespoon unsalted butter (or substitute for vegans)
¼ tablespoon fresh minced garlic
2 slices sourdough bread
4 slices fresh tomato
2-4 slices aged white cheddar cheese (or substitute for vegans)

Heat butter in a large skillet over medium heat.
Add garlic and sauté 30 seconds or until lightly browned.
Place cheese and tomatoes on sourdough and saute each side for approximately 1 minute or until each side is toasty brown, making sure garlic coats each side.
Voila, feed!

Cartoon by Anne Skove



Say what?!

We've got to take back the ideal of justice. We've got to take back this principle of human dignity. We've got to take it back from vengeance, from hatred. We've got to say, "Look, we're all in this together. We are human beings."
- David Kaczynski

Officer Runs Over Woman in Park

Crushed to death while lying in grass

By GREGORY FLANNERY
EDITOR

Joann Burton's death in Washington Park remains under investigation by the Ohio State Highway Patrol. She died July 27 of injuries sustained after being run over by a police cruiser as she lay on the grass. Burton, who was homeless, was 48. The Hamilton County Prosecutor's Office will decide whether to file criminal charges against Cincinnati Police Officer Marty Polk, who was in the park on a routine patrol. Polk drove off a service road and into the grass, according to the police department. Officers at the park initially told *Streetvibes* that Burton had only sustained a foot injury.

County Coroner O'dell Owens ruled the death accidental, caused by blunt-force injuries. Burton suffered a lacerated liver and pelvic and rib fractures, according to Owens. The Greater Cincinnati Coalition for the Homeless organized a vigil in Burton's memory in Washington Park the night of the fatal accident. Josh Spring, executive director of the Homeless Coalition, also called for a change in police procedures. "The Burton family and the Greater Cincinnati Coalition for the Homeless anxiously await the results of the state investigation," Spring says. "The Greater Cincinnati Coalition for the Homeless demands a change in policy. Other than in extreme situations, such as a shooting, police must not be allowed to drive through the grassy, pedestrian areas in parks. This practice is simply too dangerous. Together we can prevent such a tragedy."



Thomas J. "Cornbread" Oats (center) listens to a hymn sung by an unidentified woman (right) July 27, while friends and acquaintances of his wife, Joann Burton, construct a makeshift candle-lit memorial during a vigil. Burton, 48, a homeless woman, was killed late that morning when a Cincinnati Police cruiser ran her over while she was lying on the grass in the park. Jon Hughes/Photopresse.

Poetry Corner

Four Haiku Poem

By DAVID S. POINTER

Needle exchange site
where night shift teens
mainline towards love

Blue reef surfers
rumble and ride
a dream

Three strikes
out of trouble
at the bowling alley

Elder's rag box
off rez homeless shelter
now arson ash

Cancer Treatment: The Unknown Story

By DAVID S. POINTE

Need based assistance
Was met with greed
Based resistance as
Dr. Royal Rife's new
Microscope and cure
For cancers' stemming
From viruses and bacteria
Were suppressed by an
Earlier cunning congress
Seated in service to the
Medical and pharmaceutical
Fortunes to be made then
Multiplied when more
Unsuspecting people
Became patients seen
By strategically silent
Doctors providing a
Certain brand of Quality
Care like mortuary assistants
Specializing in an untold
Spectrum of dark

Cleo's Joke Corner



What do you call a detective who takes bubble baths?
Sherlock Foam.

Woman

By ELISA HILL

God gave her that title that you just can't tuck away.
God gave her that throne that you just can't dismiss today.
God gave her that voice in which to call out his name.
God gave that torch to light up the lands.
God gave her that rib to show she has purpose.
God gave her that husband to show she is worth it.
God gave her that child through so much adversity and pain.
God gave her that glory to survive all the rains.
God gave her that peace in which her eternity is heaven sent.
God gave her that receipt that she paid her dues well spent.
See, God gave her his blessing to be whatever she chose to be.
She chose to be a great woman, now all life chooses to envy.
Thank God!
Rock on to all great women!

The Men

By DAVID S. POINTER

It wasn't a box car supper social
They weren't exchanging job leads
A badger-haired hooligan rammed
The yard bull into a cattle horned
Hat rack for ruining the fish soup
The men trampled egg wire baskets
And pumpkin goulash trying for a train

When the Walls Come Tumbling

Continued from page 7

that does authority always win?

JM: Oh, I'm a hypocrite, there's no question about it. Don't you know a hypocrite when ya see one? You're looking right at him. Ah yeah, I'm in the wind all the time because ya have to be in the wind all the time. If you're steadfast on your commitments ... I have a new song. It's called, "Save Some Time to Dream," and I address that and it says, "Always keep your mind open and always question your faith." You can't just say that this is my position and this is my position for life because, ya know, you discover new information, you see, you grow up. You see things through different eyes. So, you know, I suppose that in the world's eyes, I'm a hypocrite because I'll say one thing and do another, but I said one thing 25 years ago and being judged for an action that I did today. So, ya know, things change, man.

KL: How so? I hear more respect for you and your work in fighting authority and I see you winning over time in the things you're taking on. Is that an illusion?

JM: I guess that's an illusion, 'cause I don't feel that way.

KL: How do you feel?

JM: I feel like you're damned if ya do and damned if you don't – so to hell with it. That's what I feel about it.

KL: Just go with your spirit then.

JM: Yeah.

KL: In the past few years there have been people talking about drafting you to become an authority, to get you involved with politics. I see you as too honest for that.

JM: Oh, I couldn't do that at all. My "cocksuckers" and "motherfuckers" would probably not fly very well in conversation in the Congress, ya know.

KL: I could see you on the floor: "Your honorable son of a bitch ..."

JM: "Ya' lying ccksucker." Yeah, I don't think it would go very good.

KL: Which is a real good segue to...

JM: Besides, why was that job open? Cause the guy that was doing it couldn't stand it anymore. He wanted to quit because the hypocrisy was too great for him, so he said, "I can't do this anymore." Not me.

KL: You've always fought convention in your work, your life and your music. And No Better Than This is the perfect example of busting convention to shreds. It's so not the McMusic they play on the McRadio today. This is a tasty CD. What was your inspiration for the whole premise?

JM: Well, I knew I was gonna go on tour. Bob (Dylan) and I did a tour last summer, and I knew I was gonna come close to all these places. It was kind of a leisurely tour, so I thought, well hell, at the time, let's make the most out of this – we're gonna be in these places, and that was just how it started.

And then I wrote the songs and I wrote all those songs in about in about 10-15 days, I don't know. It was just I'd get up every morning and I'd write. I'd write two or three songs in a day and I let the songs write themselves, as opposed to sometimes when you write songs you try to steer them a way that you would like them to go. But these songs, I just, they kind of wrote themselves really, I just let them go wherever they wanted to go and that's how they ended up.

KL: What about the idea of the recording process, recorded in mono?

JM: Well, of course, it was a rebellious act of, ya know. There is a song on the record called, "The West End," and it says "It's worse now, look what progress did." So I decided that, you know, to go just as far away from the popular culture of music as I possibly could and just go back to where it began. The whole record was recorded on one channel and, ya know, one tape machine (a 1955 Ampex), and the whole band played it once and there was one microphone.

KL: It is such a pure sound.

JM: There are no over-dubs, no echo, there's no anything. It's just what the room sounded like and it was fun because it was musicians actually playing

music, as opposed to building a record or constructing a record.

KL: How did you choose the locations?

JM: By the way the tour was routed. I knew that I was gonna be close to Memphis, and I knew I was gonna start in Savannah and I have a house in right outside of Savannah on an island, so it gave me an opportunity to stay there and work a couple days, and then we went to Memphis. Then we tried to go to Texas to the building where Johnson also recorded, but it was condemned and they wouldn't let us in. So we ended up having to go to San Antonio, which was kind of out of the way, but we were only there two days.

KL: We absolutely love "Right Behind Me" – the sound, the feel. From the very start with Miriam Sterm's attacking strings.

JM: It's that corner, that's the same corner that Robert Johnson recorded "Hell Hound's on My Trail" in San Antonio, Texas, Gunter Hotel. And like T-Bone (Burnett) said, that's the best-sounding corner I ever heard.

KL: Right, that is such a great song. And the hook, the hook is incredible – you know, "You know the devil, he thinks he got me, he ain't got me."

Last question, I can tell you that from when I was unhoused and living in my car, you nailed the feeling of hopelessness in "Graceful Fall."

Since 2007, foreclosures and job losses increased the number of families in shelters nearly 30%. Each night there are 640,000 unhoused Americans who have lost domestic autonomy and are living on the streets and in shelters; 15 percent are veterans. Some of those will be selling the very street papers which are carrying your words right now. As you did from the stage in Toledo, what are your words of hope to all of our brothers and sisters who are living on the streets of our country?

JM: Wow, that's a big question, that's an awfully big question. I wish I had something that I could say that seemed to address that question, but I'm not sure I really do at this point in our country. So, I don't know, you know.

KL: You've always been a fighter, you've always had hope.

JM: Well, I've always, ah, I've always had a bunch of dumb cliché things

that my family taught me that I always passed on to my kids. My grandfather passed them on to me and they've always provided some sort of hope in my life.

They're not very eloquent, but the greatest advice I ever got in my life and, it's not very eloquent, but "If you're gonna hit a cocksucker, kill him." And what my grandfather meant when he said that was, if you're actually going to do something, don't talk about it, don't brag about it, just go do it and do it to the best that you can possibly do. And that's what he was saying, don't be threatening, don't be talking, don't be bragging. I think that, as un-eloquently as it was said, it was probably one of the most important things said to me in my life.

KL: Which is a perfect thing to say to the people on the streets, because if you're gonna get off the streets, you can.

JM: You can, you need to! See, the problem is most people give up too early and I'm not talking about just the people on the street, I'm just talking about people in general. They give up on relationships too early, they give up on themselves too early, they give up on life too early. I mean I've been writing that since I was a kid. In the song called, "Jack and Diane," you know they were only 16 and already giving up. People just give up too early, they just quit, you know: "This is too hard" or "I don't wanna do this anymore."

I think that's a problem, and I think that's a problem our country has. Over the decades it was allowed to happen by the work ethic and through capitalism. A lot of things that affect this country that allow people to think that way, that the world owes them a living. And as soon as you start thinking that somebody owes you something, forget it, man; you're done. And as soon as you start thinking you're right and everybody else is wrong ... It's like the guy who was married six or seven times, hell, I think it might be me – I think this could be me, I'm starting to think this is my problem.

Ken Leslie has been throwing starfish back in the ocean since 1990 and can be contacted at 1Matters.org.



Mellencamp's music has long featured political themes. Toledo Streets.

Want more Streetvibes? Check out the STREETVIBES BLOG
<http://streetvibes.wordpress.com>

Four Subjects: A Scenario

Things aren't always as they seem

Life on the street can take many turns or, if you will, present many different scenarios. A day can have circumstances and situations that can be baffling, unwarranted or dangerous.

In all conclusion, it's just another day in the life – that familiar way of doing things, if you haven't heard, then sit a spell and hear the way it goes.

Street life, disaster and triumph all rolled into one, each episode an integral part of the life – or, if you will, perhaps we'll call it “the game.” Changes and adjustments all included, we begin the games that constitute the life.

Applying my minor skills with the language, we'll use four different subjects. “Be not naive, get it straight.” Every player actual exists.

Let us start with the Profound Dude. True to the game, he lives his name. Profound! This dude comes up with everything he needs. A professional finder. A place to sleep, something to eat, a dollar or two for his pocket. A way to get to his next stop, these are his objectives in life. A life where sadness and joy are equal. Never to be one without, he has questions for all the answers; seek, and you will find. Always endured with an air of contentment, prowling the neighborhood for his next find, he lives life without concern. Never seeking change, his pleasure in life is to find that one big score, that find that will allow him to retire his cart. Meanwhile he will keep searching for his next find. Profound!

Next on our list of characters is the Con Man. He is an investor. Oh, does he have something for you! A line that can't be true, full of promises that you're sure to believe. A small investment will get you nothing, perhaps an attitude because he has hoodwinked you for a

STREET
LIFE
By RICCARDO TAYLOR
STREETVIBES VENDOR

dollar or two. Down the block he strolls looking for his next mark. A seller of dreams and hopes that, for the sake of your common sense, you want to believe. Yet that is his game! Hey, want to buy a bridge (Brooklyn's)? Or perhaps a wall (China's)?

Ah! The Trickster. Now this is a dude that you have to watch, because he is out for what he can get at your expense. His game is based on pure lies. Though you think you might have heard this before (the con man), there is a difference. Unlike his closest of kin, the Trickster is asking for small change – that is, until you go into your pocket to spare him the change so that he can get something to eat. The moment he sees your wad, he remembers he has to ride the Metro, so now it's, “Can you spare more?” The dissimilarities don't end there. The Trickster can be an illusionist. He might have a month-old hospital band on his arm to convince you that he just left the hospital for some terminal injury. So do you have a little more for a prescription he can't afford? Listen to his spiel and you're sure to be tricked.

Now we come to the last but not the least of the players. Mr. Pitiful. Think you've heard every story that's ever been told? Well, he has a new one for you. The day his wife left and his children ran away from home, and his poor dog died from starvation. Then there's the one about how he's new to the area, just got off the Greyhound. Can you direct him to the nearest shelter or perhaps tell him where to get a meal? Better yet, “I'm starved. Can you spare \$5? Please, please, I need pity on me. Can't you see that I can't do anything on my own?”

Of course, not all street players have some deception in mind when you encounter them. However, the reality is that those who are out to deceive you are on the prowl. It is my belief that, if you have at least some indication of who you encounter, then you will have a better judgment of the people who have that life of the street, thus allowing you to better judge the needs you perceive. Ah, such a familiar term: “Perception.” The golden rule: Things are not always what they seem. Nor can we react in that pre-determined way of our beliefs or ideas. We all tend to do what we know and know what we do.

Suzy Cincinnati Finds Her Voice

How to advocate for affordable housing

By MICHELLE DILLINGHAM
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Her name is Suzy Cincinnati. She believes everyone should have the opportunity to live in housing whose appliances work, free of roaches, free of chipping lead-poisoned paint; that families should not have to decide between paying the rent, and paying for medications or food.

Sometimes Suzy Cincinnati hears about a developer getting a tax break from the city for a redevelopment project yet there is no plan to include affordable units, and the developer plans to move out the people of lower incomes who live there now. Sometimes she hears that some city politicians are delaying a much-needed transitional-living apartment project, or they want to displace a homeless shelter. She is angered: This isn't right and wishes there was a way she could share her opinion. She wonders, “Isn't anyone going to do anything about this?”

The first thing Suzy needs to know is that much of what happens that impacts affordable housing, such as subsidies and projects, is centered in the legislative process at City Hall and the Hamilton County Board of Commissioners. This is why Affordable Housing Advocates AHA, as an advocacy organization, encourages monitoring and weighing in on decisions made by officials elected to those bodies.

An effective way to engage with Cincinnati city leadership is to review council's calendar and write an e-mail or call to let them know your opinion. Anyone can review the city's committee agenda to see what is on deck for discussion and action. Sometimes the agenda does not come out on the city's Web site until right before the deadline, which is 24 hours before the meeting. Something Suzy Cincinnati might not know is that anyone can call the council member who is chair of the committee and simply ask her staff what, if anything, is on the calendar related to housing. They will refer to something on the agenda as an “item,” which can be in the form of a motion, an ordinance, a resolution or communication:

Motion: A motion is a formal proposal by a member of council, in a meeting, that the council take certain action.

Ordinance: An ordinance has the effect of local law in the City of Cincinnati. Ordinances are codified in the Municipal Code of the City of Cincinnati.

Resolution: A resolution is an action by the Council that generally

does not have the effect of law. A resolution generally expresses council's will, intent or policy on a particular matter. Also, the council generally appoints individuals to serve on authorities, boards and commissions by the adoption of a resolution.

Communication: A communication can be a letter, an e-mail, or any written form of communication from anyone that a council member can add to the agenda so it can be a permanent part of the city's record.

An Internet search strategy to monitor housing issues in Cincinnati is to check “Council On-Line” linked to the city's Web site. Here you can put in the word “housing” for a search and it will provide you with any and all items that have come through City Hall related to housing.

Having a vocal, visible presence from those who advocate for affordable housing is important to help set a pattern of response and awareness of the affordable housing agenda by council and commissioners. Opponents to affordable housing testify, write and meet with city and county administration, employees and elected officials to dissuade them from supporting affordable housing. We must do the same to provide a balance as they contemplate decisions that have a great impact on all of us.

There are a great number of issues that Suzy Cincinnati can get involved in: the development of Over-the-Rhine, which includes significant changes to Washington Park and its surrounding housing stock; participating in “PLAN Cincinnati,” our city's planning document for the future; and a plethora of state and federal legislation that affects affordable housing locally, to name a few.

Of course, another way to get involved is to come to AHA's monthly member meeting and get informed on all the most up-to-date events and happenings related to affordable housing in Cincinnati. AHA members are effective advocates collectively and we can always use more voices: We attend meetings of the board of the Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority Board and city council and in the near future will be meeting with political candidates to educate them on the affordable housing community's concerns. If you are like Suzy Cincinnati, she now knows that AHA is here to help find her voice for affordable-housing advocacy.

For more information on how to get involved with AHA, call Michelle Dillingham, AHA project coordinator, at 513-602-4260.

‘Streetvibes’: An Appreciation

And a hope for things to come

By **MARTHA STEPHENS**
 CONTRIBUTING WRITER

I’m retired, and I spend the winters with my daughter in a progressive town in New Mexico. The first thing I look for at home are my back issues of *Streetvibes* – I want to see what’s really happening. Coming back this spring, I saw that Cincinnati life seemed to be going from bad to worse, that progressive people are not organized, that big money is in the saddle sitting taller than ever, moving to take over every foot of downtown space, for instance, for its own profiteering, buying its own Republican City Council, hoping to ride the rest of us into the abyss.

We are to have the city they want us to have, like it or not. To me it feels like an occupied country here.

Street papers are wonderful, though. I love them, and I was happy to read about street papers around the world in the June reports by Greg Flannery (see “Do You Want to Hold Me?,” issue of June 1-14). It’s wonderful that Greg was able to go to Australia and compare notes with other editors and tell us how they do things and how we compare in Cincinnati. And we do well! We have a heckuva good paper here and good numbers, selling 8,000 papers a month through the work of no less than 50 vendors and a great many talented writers, individuals willing to work hard just for conscience and no pay.

Street papers, Greg tells us, all provide income for vendors; but for me, at least, their value goes way beyond that, for the best of these papers tell us not just about poverty and homelessness but the root *causes* of poverty and homelessness and help us map out the struggles we have to wage to provide every citizen a place to live and a job and health care and all the rest – in short, to change our whole rapacious economic system.

‘We need to know’

Business values are not human values, and money machines are quite ready to throw people out of their spaces if they can’t make money off them. Tom Dutton knows this better than anyone, I’m sure, and I was glad to see his comprehensive piece called “Over-the-Rhine: A context for the city’s attack on the Drop Inn Center” (See “District 9: Over-the-Rhine,” issue of June 15-30).

The brutal displacement of people who get in the way of commerce is an old story in Cincinnati, and I appreciated Dutton’s careful outline of the displacements of recent years – from the Milner to the Metropole; from the ordinance in 2001 to control low-income housing in “impacted” areas, to the attempt to zone out service agencies from Over-the-Rhine. What was in it for the refugees? Nothing but promises – never kept. For the hundred units lost at the Milner Hotel in 1994, where low-income individuals had

found a home for many years, not one exists today, Dutton writes. I had wondered about that.

If people don’t want homeless faces staring at them from the streets and doorways of downtown, gazing at the responsible citizens strolling down the sidewalks to Music Hall, shouldn’t we provide, as Dutton says, more decent-paying, lower-skilled jobs? Some affordable housing, some treatment for addiction, some health care, some child care, some education? Aren’t those the ways to reduce homelessness? Seems all too obvious, yet apparently it can’t be done.

“The crisis of affordable housing” is the subject of Michele Dillingham’s report in the same June issue, and the data on Section 8 availability seems truly amazing – 24,000 subsidized units for the 121,000 families who need them.

Dutton’s piece, and Dillingham’s, moved me to go back to a certain book I possess on the blood-smeared history of the West End, a book called *Contested Ground* by John Emmeus Davis (Cornell University Press, 1991). It tells quite a story. Over 50,000 residents, mostly black and some of them householders, became refugees from the West End during the so-called urban renewal cataclysms of the 1940s, ’50s and ’60s – throwing out citizens from their homes for the sake of industrial takeovers, for “improved” housing and for the clear cutting of hundreds of acres to build Interstate 75.

In those years a whole vibrant way of life was lost. The black churches were lost, the black settlement houses, the black schools and libraries, the nightclubs, the rich musical New York-style entertainments.

Author Davis came down from the east during the ’80s to research and write this story. He studied a lot of documents and interviewed a lot of citizens, some of whom still remembered all that had taken place. He interviewed Maurice McCracken. Beginning in the 1960s, West Enders had gotten organized and fought back. They won back some of their rights, and Davis was particularly interested in this fight-back in Cincinnati against the power elite of the city/business coalition of the time, the same one we struggle against today.

In Greg Flannery’s report, “Beggars Must Now Be Choosers,” we learn that this alliance is now trying to take away the long-standing right of the Coalition for the Homeless to set minimum standards for its members, which have allowed for the sheltering of people who also panhandle (see issue of July 1-14). One must watch to see what happens to the coalition’s lawsuit to block the city’s new panhandling rule. It is a suit that also tries to restore the coalition’s prerogatives, and the loss of the role traditionally played by the coalition seems like a very serious matter. We should all be contacting the city, perhaps, about this ugly denial of free speech for the poor and about the attack on the coalition. “Brother,

can you spare a dime” is a plea not to be spoken in Cincinnati?

The physical violence against the homeless around the country is well documented in the July report by Margo Pierce (see “Hate Wave,” issue of July 1-14). It makes painful reading. Anger against people who are in need or simply different is rising in these hard times, and we read in “Sheriff Wants to Follow Arizona” about a local sheriff who flies off to Arizona to study the anti-emigrant law he hopes to emulate in Butler County (see issue of June 1-14). What next for poor old Cincinnati? Haven’t we seen it all?

On emigrants, I was glad to read Jeremy Flannery’s report on the International Socialist Organization’s (ISO) forum at the University of Cincinnati. I’d have looked in on this meeting, had I known about it. An ISO activist from Chicago came down to participate, and another speaker was Dan La Botz, who’s running for the U. S. Senate and knows a great deal about the lives of Latinos. He is the author of the book, *Democracy in Mexico: Peasant Rebellion and Political Reform*.

We need to know the bad and the ugly in his town and all that the power elite is up to – but also that people of conscience are still among us. I liked hearing about the doctors and other workers at the McMicken Dental Clinic, about the defeat of a strange new sex-offender law, about the Avondale Youth Council, about the “New Marijuana Majority” (see issue of July 15-31). I enjoyed the reports by Saad Ghosn on engaged artists and Bonnie Neumeier’s poem “If Only” about her dreams for Over-the-Rhine.

‘We must organize’

It was good to read about the presence in Northside of four individuals speaking out around the country for nuclear abolition, in the report “Sad Anniversary for the A-Bomb” (see issue of June 15-30). I wondered if this group knew about Carol Rainey’s book, *A Hundred Miles from Home*, on the long-hidden nuclear waste in our own area. Their work report made me think about a favorite little verse of mine by John Hall Wheelock, called “Earth”:

“A planet doesn’t explode of itself,” said drily

The Martian astronomer, gazing off into the air --

“That they were able to do it is proof that highly

Intelligent brings must have been living there.”

I appreciated the column by Michael Henson, “A Message to Social Workers” (see issue of July 1-14). Helping is wonderful, he writes, and many of our social workers are very good at it, but workers can help only “too late and too small,” and so should also work to change the system that is creating such massive need. “We are bound,” he writes, “to operate on good, evidence-based practices. But it is not enough. We have to be political.”

I was glad to see this view expressed. During my long years at U.C., I ran into officials and faculty

who felt that teachers should not express their own views about society in the classroom. I felt we had a perfect right to do just that, whenever it was relevant to what we were teaching, and as long as we gave students a chance to speak up, too. I tried to design courses that would lead to vivid exchanges and change students’ minds about society, and I hope we did change some minds.

Also in July was the splendid front-page picture of solidarity people marching through the Arizona desert to simulate the desperate journey of the migrants, whose bones are so often found in that scorched Sonoran earth (see “Trail of Tears, Trail of Death,” issue of July 15-31).

Churches are in the forefront of struggle these days, and it was good to read about the work for jobs of the Amos Project, their support for Senator Brown’s Local Jobs for America Act and their delivery of 1,000 job applications to the offices of U.S. Rep. Steve Driehaus (D-Cincinnati) and U.S. Sen. George Voinovich (R-Ohio). Certainly workers are in a cruel position these days. Paul Kopp makes this clear in his July report, “Championing the Workers’ Rights” about the attack on union supporters at Champion Windows and Doors (see issue of July 15). Most people can hardly find out about struggles like this any more – they aren’t considered news by our morning newspaper or on TV, but maybe it’s just as well.

I recall that, in the first issue of a magazine I once edited, *The Cincinnati Review*, a piece was sent us by a young journalist who was being placed on probation for union-organizing at Cincinnati Suburban Press (CSP). His name was Greg Flannery, and after wild and almost comical performances by CSP officials at a National Labor Relations Board hearing, he wrote up that story, too: “On the Union Battlements: More Dirty Tricks.” Here was the *Streetvibes* mode before there was a *Streetvibes*.

I think street papers are the souls of cities. I wish we could print 10 times, 20 times, more papers than we do. All of us readers should perhaps get up from our desks and computers and figure out how to help circulate our street paper, help it reach out to all the citizens who could engage with it and who might become as disturbed as we are by the crimes against humanity we see around us every day.

We must organize – somehow – against the ruination of life on our small, inconspicuous planet. Should we all go out and stand in the street and say, “We won’t move until ...?” I don’t know, but we must do something – together. We like to remember that there’s more of Us and than there is of Them. If there’s power in numbers, we have the numbers. Why then are we so abjectly shy and silent so much of the time? ♪

Does anyone have the answer?

Martha Stephens is the author of The Treatment: The Story of Those Who Died in the Cincinnati Radiation Tests.

From the Streets to the Sanctuary

I met God while I was homeless

By **ANDREW MARTIN**
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

All the first 21 years of my life I traveled and lived with the homeless, whether it was in my father's house or on a beach in Tampa, Fla. When I was 5 years old, my mother left my father with seven children. Life became difficult with her departure, and I learned to live without many of the bare essentials of life. My Dad housed many homeless people in our house as we were growing up, and I got to hear their stories and understand the amazing variety of lives that they lived until they fell on hard times.

I grew up in Mount Auburn with my Dad and my six other siblings. Since we were very poor, most of my friends were those whom my Dad invited to stay in our house. Amazingly, it was these street people, many homeless, who watched us as children while my Dad was at work and we got to know them like family.

My father was a roofer and painter who worked in Cincinnati. I learned early in life that every person has a story. I learned that many homeless people were once very successful in the world's eyes. Due to poor choices, addictions or tragedies, they lost everything. One homeless man I knew was once a millionaire who built customized homes but fell in the trap of alcoholism and lost everything.

In many ways, living on the streets or becoming homeless can happen to any one of us. Yes, there are some who could get a job and better their lives but others are just victims of life's challenges or choices that went bad. In my teen years I became homeless for a while and understand the everyday hardships just to find a shower or to get a meal without being looked down on by the rest of society. Homeless people are not looking so much for handouts but for support and help so that they can get back on their feet and work out things that went bad in their lives. There are always going to be people who are unemployed in our society.

As the years went by, I saw my own life fall apart from the poor decisions I made. I was taken from my family and put into an orphanage. Later I became a teenaged single father and a high-school dropout. I began to lose all hope in life, and began to turn to alcohol and drugs. Many nights I found myself sleeping on the streets when I was just in my late teens. Deep despair crept into my soul, and I really felt that there was no way out.

At the age of 16, I left home and found myself wandering on the streets in Tampa. I was eventually arrested and put in jail. The day that I was arrested I was sleeping in an abandoned truck in a gas station in Tampa. Though the truck had no tires, I was falsely accused of trying to steal the truck, but only slept in the truck to get a good night's sleep. In jail, I thought long and hard about the meaninglessness of my life and I got on my knees and prayed sincerely to God for the first time, "Dear Lord, Help me. Amen."

Like many who live on the streets or who are homeless, I just wanted a

better life and a more normal American life. The American dream was all I wanted but I was in jail because nobody seemed to believe that I needed a good night's sleep. The judge understood me and freed me without any criminal record, and he even flew me back to Cincinnati. I missed most of all just having a bed to sleep in at night, a nice shower and a place to eat three meals a day. This judge was the first of many times that God began to help me and show me that He cared for my life.

In 1984, God answered my prayer by sending a youth pastor of an international student ministry to call me. With this youth pastor, I began to seek God for his answers through the study of the book of Genesis. I came to realize that God created us all and he had a wonderful purpose for our lives.

Though I was now 21 years of age, never finished high school, was a sorrowful single father and never held down a real job, I decided to trust God to make a new start and go to college. It was his love that motivated me and gave me courage to face the "Red Sea" that was in front of me. It was His love that changed this shy boy into a man with great confidence and hope for a bright future. In the past, all I knew was hardship and failure. God's love motivated me to reach out to my brothers and sisters who lived on the streets and were homeless. I used to spend every day witnessing on the streets God's love to those who walked by. I discovered that God has a great purpose for everyone and that even failures or being homeless does not mean defeat or hopelessness. In fact, in God, they are places or stations in your life where you can grow in faith and love.

I began to write and speak out every chance I could get – even writing a few articles in the past in *Streetvibes* and other newspapers. After graduating from five colleges and becoming a registered nurse, in 2005, I wrote my first book, *Crossing the Red Sea*, named "inspirational book of the year" by Christianstoryteller.com. God helped me to write this book because I wanted to share my story with others, including those who lived on the streets and the homeless.

I had an interview with Barbara Cain on 93.3 FM radio station, and stories have been written about the work of God in my life in some of the local newspapers. Those who live on the streets or who are homeless represent all of us. They all have stories and it is great to have a newspaper like *Streetvibes* that enables the homeless to have a voice so that they can be heard.

Last year I wrote a second book, *His Vision, His Beauty, and His Glory: Our life and purpose on planet earth*. I recently finished my third book, *To Be With God*. My books are read all over the world, but at one time I lived on the streets. A few years ago my supervisor at work went to Rome and gave Pope Benedict XVI a signed copy of *Crossing the Red Sea*.

I find much of what I learned on the streets and from the homeless people who lived with us over the years is the wisdom of God. God's truth is seen so clearly through their struggles of life. Jesus teaches us in the gospel to embrace all people and that the good news must be preached to the poor (Matthew 11:5). Everyone deserves the right to be heard and the dignity of life which has been given to all of us by our creator. We must lift up the fallen with prayer and let them know that there is always hope in God. There is no shame in living on the streets or being homeless; even Jesus was homeless. Instead, may God's good purpose be carried out in all of our brothers and sisters, no matter where you are in life. You are not alone; God is with you.

Andrew Martin is pastor of University Bible Fellowship Church in Highland Heights, Ky.

There's A Gleam in the Bengals

And no holdouts as the season begins

By **B. CLIFTON BURKE**
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

It was January 11, 1986, at Cleveland's old Municipal Stadium where Marty Schottenheimer gathered his troops on the sideline and told them that there existed a part of football beyond that of our physical senses. He called it "the gleam." He didn't go into detail; he simply told them it existed and to go get it. I used to think he was the only one who ever knew anything about the gleam and that perhaps he was a mystic, but reading about the Bengals lately, I think I can sense the gleam, too.

I'm an emotionally cautious person these days when it comes to the Bengals. I used to get all fired up when training camp would roll around and pronounce them serious contenders ... every year. Then the 2008 season came along and crushed my spirit. Obviously, last year soothed some of that trauma, yet nonetheless, I've tried to remain guarded about my favorite team – it just isn't working.

They have a gleam to them. Even when I try to think analytically about the whole thing, it still equates to the Bengals having a great season. I

don't detect a clear weakness in this team, and they were damn good last year with what seems like half of this year's roster. They're deep at nearly every position, they have a platoon of healthy players returning and now they have real star power. The coaches can feel it, the players can feel and I can, too. Something is certainly shining in Georgetown, Ky. right now.

I know what you're thinking: It's TO that's getting me so excited. Well, you're mostly right.

What I am dying to find out is how the Bengals will attack the New England Patriots in Week 1. Even if Antonio Bryant still isn't healthy, suddenly Cincinnati has one of the deepest receiving corps in the league and can throw to a plethora of targets. Jason LaCanfora of the NFL Network said that what he hears from scouts is that Owens is best when teams put him in motion and move him around to seek out match-ups that favor the offense. Buffalo wasn't able to use TO like that last year, but our offense can put him all over the field and still not draw double teams. With Chad Ochocinco and Jermaine Gresham on the field, too, defenses will have to pick their poison against these guys.

That's even if we pass all that much. Bob

Bratkowski has been steady with his remarks that this remains a power-run team, and that, he says, won't change. Who can blame him? Now that Cedric Benson is officially off the hook with the commissioner's office, might as well use him up – considering he becomes a free agent after this season. The line is built for the run, especially if that fat ass Andre Smith can get it going, and the stable of running backs complements one another nicely. I don't think anyone has a problem with the Bengals racking up the rushing yards, but it's when they need to pass that needs improved, and after a vigorous campaign to improve just that, I think they will be.

Not one player held out because they didn't like their current contract, despite the upcoming labor skirmish swirling around the new collective bargaining agreement and despite its being the cool thing to do. No one (of importance) hurt himself in the off-season. No one got suspended. Fans are flocking to Georgetown in record numbers to scream support to their team. National pundits now like the Bengals. Mike Brown just pulled off one of the most successful off-seasons in recent memory. Crazy things are happening. It's the gleam!

Mojokong—bubbling over.

Likes and Dislikes in My Life

Why is one so often connected with the other?

By LARRY GROSS
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Feel free to let me know if I'm full of it, but it seems in everyday life – at least in mine – there are things I like that are so often connected with things I don't like, or vice versa. Sometimes you have to put up with some of life's discomforts and nuisances to get to the pleasures. Sometimes it's the other way around.

I'll give you some personal examples of what I'm getting at.

I dislike the whole process of showering in the morning, getting the hot water right, using the soap and washing my hair while getting shampoo in my eyes; but afterward, I like the idea that I'm clean.

Shaving is something I never look forward to, but I like applying after-shave to my face when the task is done. I've been using this Arctic Blue stuff for years and like the way it stings when it touches my shaved face.

I'm sad and don't like it when family and friends pass away, but cheer up when I remember how lucky I was to have had the chance to know them.

I like talking to strangers while riding on the bus but I don't like it when I start to suspect that the person I'm talking to is crazy.

I hate having to record all those ATM receipts I have stuffed in my wallet but I love the fact I always know exactly how much money I have in my checking account.

Having President Obama in office is something I like, but I dislike the fact that he's turned out to be a conservative.

Even an old fart of my age still enjoys having sex, but even old farts like me don't necessarily enjoy a lot of small talk after the sex is over. We can talk later.

Not that I sleep around that much, but when

I do get a "date," I like touching real breasts on women. Those breasts can be of any size or color; I don't care. What I hate discovering are fake breasts of any size or color. I know immediately if they're not real. It's a turnoff.

I dislike having arguments or disagreements with friends, but like the fact that I know them well enough to simply say what I think.

When I go grocery shopping at Kroger, I really dislike it when I hold up the line and have to tell the cashier that I need cigarettes and she or he has to go to the service desk to get the key to go and unlock the cigarette case to get the cigarettes; and I especially dislike it when he or she gets the wrong brand and has to repeat the whole process, but I like it when the ordeal is over for both of us.

While on the subject of cigarettes, there's nothing I like better in the morning than a cigarette with a cup of coffee, but I dislike the fact that probably both coffee and cigarettes are killing me.

I like the alternative press like *Streetvibes* but dislike the fact that so many newspapers, including those I don't like, are struggling.

Cooking fancy meals for guests or even for myself is something I enjoy, but I dislike having to do the dishes afterwards.

I like looking at Jessica Simpson but can't stand to hear her sing. The same goes for Faith Hill.

Vodka is my drink of choice and I like it very much, but dislike how I

feel when I've had too much of it.

I believe in and like taking public transportation but dislike it when that public transportation doesn't show up on time.

I enjoy lending books to friends that I think they might like but I become annoyed and dislike it when months or even years go by and they don't bother to return the book.

Getting back to the old fart business, I like the fact that I still look at pretty young girls but dislike the fact that sometimes I feel like a dirty old man.

I like listening and watching thunderstorms or heavy rain but dislike it when I'm caught out in those

thunderstorms or heavy rain.

I like snow but don't like it when it starts to melt.

While I don't like the fact that I'm getting older – I wish time would slow down – but it's better than the alternative, which is being dead. I like the fact that I'm smarter than I was 20 years ago. I wish I knew then what I know now.

All right, I'm done. Those are my examples of likes associated with dislikes or vice versa. Actually, writing this has given me a bit of a headache. While I dislike taking aspirins to get rid of headaches, I like the fact that the aspirins get rid of the headache and in this case have enabled me to finish this column on a somewhat intelligent note.

Or maybe not.

When I go grocery shopping at Kroger, I really dislike it when I hold up the line and have to tell the cashier that I need cigarettes and she or he has to go to the service desk to get the key to go and unlock the cigarette case to get the cigarettes; and I especially dislike it when he or she gets the wrong brand and has to repeat the whole process, but I like it when the ordeal is over for both of us.

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Need Help or Want to Help?

Shelter: Women and Children

Central Access Point	381-SAFE
Cincinnati Union Bethel	768-6907
300 Lytle Street, Cinti, Ohio 45202	
Bethany House	557-2873
1841 Fairmount Ave, Cinti, Ohio 45214	
Grace Place Catholic Worker House	681-2365
6037 Cary Ave, Cinti, Ohio 45224	
Salvation Army	762-5660
131 E. 12th Street, Cinti, Ohio 45202	
YWCA Battered Women’s Shelter	872-9259

Shelter: Men

City Gospel Mission	241-5525
1419 Elm Street, Cinti, Ohio 45202	
Justice Watch	241-0490
St. Fran/St. Joe Catholic Work. House	381-4941
1437 Walnut Street, Cinti, Ohio 45202	
Mt. Airy Shelter	661-4620

Shelter: Both

Anthony House (Youth)	961-4080
2728 Glendora Ave, Cinti, Ohio 45209	
Caracole (HIV/AIDS)	761-1480
1821 Summit Road, Cinti, Ohio 45237	
Drop Inn Center	721-0643
217 W. 12th Street, Cinti, Ohio 45202	
Interfaith Hospitality Network	471-1100
Lighthouse Youth Center (Youth)	221-3350
3330 Jefferson, Cinti, Ohio 45220	

Housing:

CMHA	721-4580
Excel Development	632-7149
OTR Community Housing	381-1171
114 W. 14th Street, Cinti, Ohio 45202	
Tender Mercies	721-8666
27 W. 12th Street, Cinti, Ohio 45202	
Tom Geiger House	961-4555
Dana Transitional Bridge Services	751-0643
Volunteers of America	381-1954
Anna Louise Inn	421-5211

Food/Clothing

Lord’s Pantry	621-5300
OTR/Walnut Hills Kitchen & Pantry	961-1983
OTR: 1620 Vine Street, Cinti, Ohio 45202	
Walnut Hills: 2631 Gilbert, Cinti, Ohio 45206	
Our Daily Bread	621-6364
1730 Race Street, Cinti, Ohio 45202	

St. Francis Soup Kitchen	535-2719
Churches Active in Northside	591-2246
4230 Hamilton Ave, Cinti, Ohio 45223	
FreeStore/FoodBank	241-1064
112 E. Liberty Street, Cinti, Ohio 45202	
Madisonville Ed & Assistance Center	271-5501
4600 Erie Ave, Cinti, Ohio 45227	
Serves area codes: 45226, 45227, 45208, 45209	
St. Vincent de Paul	562-8841
1125 Bank Street, Cinti, Ohio 45214	

Treatment: Men

Charlie’s 3/4 House	784-1853
2121 Vine Street, Cinti, Ohio 45202	
Prospect House	921-1613
682 Hawthorne Ave, Cinti, Ohio 45205	
Starting Over	961-2256

Treatment: Women

First Step Home	961-4663
2203 Fulton, Cinti, Ohio 45206	

Treatment: Both

AA Hotline	351-0422
CCAT	381-6672
830 Ezzard Charles Dr. Cinti, Ohio 45214	
Joseph House (Veterans)	241-2965
1522 Republic Street, Cinti, Ohio 45202	
Hamilton County ADAS Board	946-4888
Recovery Health Access Center	281-7422
Sober Living	681-0324
Talbert House	641-4300

Advocacy

Catholic Social Action	421-3131
Community Action Agency	569-1840
Contact Center	381-4242
1227 Vine Street, Cinti, Ohio 45202	
Franciscan JPIC	721-4700
Gr. Cinti Coalition for the Homeless	421-7803
117 E. 12th Street, Cinti, Ohio 45202	
Intercommunity Justice & Peace Cr.	579-8547
Legal Aid Society	241-9400
Ohio Justice & Policy Center	421-1108
Faces Without Places	363-3300
Stop AIDS	421-2437

Health

Center for Respite Care	621-1868
3550 Washington Ave, Cinti, Ohio 45229	

Crossroad Health Center	381-2247
5 E. Liberty St. Cinti, Ohio 45202	
Health Resource Center	357-4602
Homeless Mobile Health Van	352-2902
McMicken Dental Clinic	352-6363
40 E. McMicken Ave, Cinti, Ohio 45202	
Mental Health Access Point	558-8888
Mercy Franciscan at St. John	981-5800
1800 Logan St. Cinti, Ohio 45202	
NAMI of Hamilton County	458-6670
PATH Outreach	977-4489

Other Resources

Center Independent Living Options	241-2600
Emmanuel Community Center	241-2563
1308 Race St. Cinti, Ohio 45202	
Peaslee Neighborhood Center	621-5514
214 E. 14th St. Cinti, Ohio 45202	
Franciscan Haircuts from the Heart	381-0111
1800 Logan St. Cinti, Ohio 45202	
Goodwill industries	771-4800
Healing Connections	751-0600
Mary Magdalen House	721-4811
1223 Main St. Cinti, Ohio 45202	
People Working Cooperatively	351-7921
The Caring Place	631-1114
United Way	211
Women Helping Women	977-5541
Off The Streets	421-5211

Hamilton/Middletown

St. Raephaels	863-3184
Salvation Army	863-1445
Serenity House Day Center	422-8555
Open Door Pantry	868-3276

Northern Kentucky

Brighton Center	859-491-8303
799 Ann St. Newport, KY	
ECHO/Hosea House	859-261-5857
Fairhaven Resuce Mission	859-491-1027
Homeward Bound Youth	859-581-1111
Mathews House	859-261-8009
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Found Objects and a Found Voice

Thomas Phelps speaks through his art

“I am a tinkerer,” Thomas Phelps says. “All my life I have collected stuff – found and discarded objects I have used to make things out of my imagination. I give them a new life and a voice. They end up speaking for me.”

Phelps, a mixed media/installation artist, was born in 1939 in Cincinnati, where he currently resides. He is of African-American origin, the son of parents who relocated from the South. Until the age of 21 he grew up in the West End neighborhood of Cincinnati, in the Lincoln Courts housing project for low-income families.

In elementary school he was introduced to art, and his creative ability was recognized and encouraged by his art teachers all along. He won several art contests, including a citywide contest in ninth grade, sponsored by Shillito's; it earned him a one-year scholarship to attend the Art Academy of Cincinnati.

Phelps's social awareness was practically lacking while growing up. The housing project where he lived and spent most of his time was his world; it kept him isolated and protected, disconnected from the rest of society. There and at school he mostly encountered fellow African Americans, with no direct reasons for racial questioning or confrontation. His parents, who had experienced the oppressive South, did not want him to deal with such issues.

“My social awakening to racial and ethnic discrimination came only at the age of 17,” Phelps says. “It was, however, in relation to the Native Americans' plight. I read by chance an article describing the slaughter by thousands of buffalos to starve the Indians who relied on their meat; also how at one point the Indians were given blankets

infested with smallpox in order to decimate them. I was appalled and revolted, and these injustices stayed with me.”

Phelps's artwork, until then with no specific statement, started addressing the American Indian situation. *Mr. and Ms. Red* is a painting that depicts an isolated and powerless Native American couple, separated from their community.

They Slaughtered Me to Kill Us, a mixed-media piece, superimposed the image of an American Indian and that of a buffalo, a reflection on the history of the U.S. government as it pertains to Native Americans.

Who Are the Founding Fathers?, a mixed-media hanging quilt incorporating found objects, shows a picture of four American Indian men positioned in front of the four U.S. presidents on Mount Rushmore. In the center of the piece is a T-shirt depicting American Indians on horseback and in war apparel; it says, “Fighting terrorism since 1492,” ironically questioning who are the terrorists when it comes to Native



Thomas Phelps in his basement studio. Saad Ghosn.

American history.

In the 1960s, thanks to the civil rights movement, Phelps became more aware of the issue. His black identity, its culture and its ancestral roots became very important to him. Through the Cincinnati Art Museum and traveling traders, he discovered African art and artifacts; he was taken by the fetishes, their imagery, their meaning. He also came across yard art brought from the South that connected him to the spirit of African ancestors.

“Society was trying to de-Africanize and demonize us,” he says. “They associated our culture with voodoo, devils, sorcery. For me, these artifacts spoke loud through their rawness and sense of mystery; they grew on me, impacted me strongly even when not fully understanding them.”

Phelps's work shifted then to mixed-media installations influenced by the African art he was experiencing; they became his identity statement, a cultural connection to his background and origin.

“I did not use my art to make statements about the civil rights movement going on at the time,” he says. “I used it instead to assert who I was, to connect to the history of blacks in this country and elsewhere. Once I found the link to my roots, I kept speaking to it, and nobody could take it away from me.”

In the 1980s, with Jimi Jones and Ken Leslie, two African-American artists from Cincinnati who felt like him, Phelps co-founded the Neo Ancestral artists' collective movement. Their goal was to make artistic visual statements related to African-American identity, legacy, community and culture.

On his own or as part of the group, Phelps continued creating his statement in mixed-media installations. He would exhibit them in public or private venues, outdoors or indoors, such as at Third World Gallery, which featured African-American art, and at the Arts Consortium, the Contemporary Arts Center, the Weston Art Gallery and the Cincinnati Art Museum.

Imprisonment, created for the Weston show, consisted of fences, posts, bars, a hanging body, a target image and weapons. It alluded to institutional prisons, but also to the isolated and confined condition of many minorities, the vulnerability and violent victimization of the poor and weak in our society.

Watermelon Mama and the Melon Chilluns Fetish, recently exhibited at the Cincinnati Art Museum, was part of a series of installations Phelps created based on postcards that debased and degraded the black race, associating it with watermelons, cotton and animals. It shows on one side a black baby in a cradle with a watermelon and a cross, the baby in his innocence and nakedness reminiscent of Jesus Christ, also a victim to this world; and the cross symbolizing the hypocrisy of hateful acts in the name of Christianity. The other side displays an African lady, two babies, watermelons, cotton and crosses.

“I meant my piece in defense of all human beings, plants, animals, objects and subjects of unjust, vulgarized characterization, by civilized, God-avowed human beings in the USA,” he says.

Phelps also used his art to make statements about wars, their casualties and the military-industrial complex. His installation, *Weapon of War Fetish*, created for an SOS Art show, reflects on how military efforts support and produce aggressive weapons, propaganda and monetary gain.

“I will always be a pacific activist,” Phelps says. “My art advocates my ideas, my beliefs, my history. It is my outlet and my voice. It empowers me and possibly others who want to hear; I do not use it, however, to convince or impose my views.”



Watermelon Mama and the Melon Chilluns Fetish, front and back, mixed media installation by Thomas Phelps. Thomas Phelps.